

Next week
Intro: 1-14
64-69 - Priars
22: 48-57
Early Church; Bonaventura, et al.

LURIANIC AND HASIDIC MYSTICISM

When all Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 Kabbalistic form of Jewish mysticism had reached the end of a certain stage of development.

in the great material and spiritual upheaval of that crises, Kabbalism established its claim to the spiritual domination of Judaism.

this fact became immediately obvious in its transformation from and esoteric into a popular doctrine.

the mystical meditations of the kabbalists on God and the creation had produced a non-messianic and individualistic mode of redemption or salvation.

in union, said a 14th cent Kabbalist, there is redemption .

after the catastrophe of the Spanish expulsion, which so radically altered the outer aspect if not the inner content of Kabbalah, it also became possible to consider the return to the starting point of creation as a means of precipitating the final world catastrophe, which would come to pass when that return had been achieved by many individuals united in a desire for "the end of the world."

long before 1492, some kabbalistic writers had proclaimed that catastrophic year as the year of redemption.

however, it brought no liberation but a most cruel exile, so the idea that redemption signified both liberation and catastrophe permeated the new religious movement to such an extent that it can only be called the obverse side of the apocalyptic temper predominating in Jewish life.

this helped merge the apocalyptic and Messianic elements of Judaism with kaballah, making the last age as important as the first.

the pathos of messianism prevailed the new Kabbalah and its classical forms of expression as

it never did the Zohar, the beginning and the end were linked together.

the redemptive character of the 1492 catastrophe was strongly emphasized. the birthpangs of the Messianic era, with which history is to "end" or to "collapse", were therefore assumed to have set in with the expulsion.

זעףד

SAFED in northern Galilee, is where "the community of the devout" as they were called bore enduring marks of the event to which it owed its origin.

there expression had far reaching impact on the outlook on life, and the new religious conceptions with which the Kabbalah at Safed laid claim to dominate the Jewish world, and did dominate it for a long time.

sufferings of the exile were linked up with the central Kabbalistic doctrines about God and man.

death, repentance, and rebirth were the three great events in human life by which the new Kabbalah sought to bring man into blissful union with God.

this new Kabbalism stand and falls with its program of bringing its doctrines home to the community, and preparing it for the coming of the Messiah.

ISAAC LURIA (1534-1572)

into this milieu of safed comes maybe the greatest one mystic of kabbalah. Tho he was only 38 when he died, and left not written legacy.

his rabbinical learning was in Egypt and he knew the early kabbalah, he was looking for new ways of expressing original thoughts

all we know of his system is based on his conversations with his disciples.

luckily, his pupils have left us several compilations of his ideas and sayings, including some which were written independently of each other so we are not dependent on a single source.

as regards Luria's personality: First and foremost he was a visionary.

the labyrinth of the hidden world of mysticism was as familiar to him as the streets of Safed.
he himself dwelt perpetually in this mysterious world.

he did not differentiate between organic and inorganic life, but insisted that souls were present everywhere and that intercourse with them was possible. He had many uncanny visions.

by habit and inclination of mind he was decidedly conservative.

LURIA'S DOCTRINE

his doctrine was neo-platonic in that creation begins with an act in which God projects His creative power out of His own self into space.

every new act is a further stage in the process of externalization, which unfolds, in accordance with emanationist theory of neo-platonism, in a straight line from above downwards.

the whole process is strictly one-way and correspondingly simple.

this creation came out of nothing and Luria reconciled them.

the Lurianic school of mystics engaged in an inner process of soul searching, and developed a doctrine of redemption which both offered an explanation of the external reality of intensified suffering in exile and presented a new path for internal spiritual salvation.

the doctrine of tsimtsum this means contraction or concentration. in the context of kabbalistic thought it is best translated as "withdrawal" or "retreat".

what does it mean?

briefly it means that the existence of the universe is made possible by a process of shrinkage in God.

this is the notion that in order to create the universe, god had to impose limits upon himself.

He had to retreat into himself in order to make space for the creation of the universe, so that very first act of creation there is a negative element present, since he had to go into exile himself so the creation could take place. - Read Essential Kabbalah, p. 94-95

in the second act of creation, God sends out a ray of His light and begins his revelation

every new act of emanation and manifestation is preceded by one of concentration and retraction so the cosmic process becomes two-fold. Read, last para, p 94 ff

There is a perpetual tension with ever repeated effort with which God holds himself back, if he didn't, nothing in the world would exist.

this paradox is the only serious attempt ever made to give substance to the idea of creation out of nothing.

this doctrine also acted as a counterpoise to the pantheism that some scholars see in the theory of emanation in Plato.

not only is there a residue of divine manifestation in every being, but under the aspect of Tsimtsum it also acquires a reality of its own which guards it against the danger of dissolution into the non-individual being or the divine "all in all".

Luria himself was an outspoken theistic mystic.

according to the theory, the essence of the Divine Being, before tsimtsum took place, contained not only the qualities of love and mercy, but also that of Divine sternness which the Kabbalists call Judgement.

but judgement was not recognizable as such as it was dissolved in the great ocean of God's compassion, like a grain of salt in the sea.

in the act of Tsimtsum, however, it crystallized and became clearly defined, for inasmuch as

Tsimtsum signifies an act of negation and limitation it is also an act of judgement.

to the kabbalist this means the imposition of limits and the correct determination of things.

just as the human organism exists through the double process of inhaling and exhaling and the one cannot be conceived w/o the other, so also the whole of creation constitutes a gigantic process of divine inhalation and exhalation.

in the final resort, therefore, the root of all evil is already latent in the act of Tsimtsum because of this judgement or power becoming clearly defined.

Go to next page supplement. →

doctrine of the breaking of the vessels

When God's light shot out in the first creation, the first being that was created was the primordial Adam, a giant man who stands behind the world.

from his eyes, ears and nose, the sefirot shine forth.

as the sefirot were differentiated from En Sof, vessels were there to catch them.

the highest three sefirot were caught in their vessels and protected, but the last six came, the light broke forth all at once and its impact proved too much for the vessels which were broken and shattered.

the same, though not to quite the same extent, occurred with the vessel of the last sefirot, the malkuth, or shekinah.

why did this happen? because the light of the last six sefirot was already mixed with the forces of evil.

when the vessel broke some of the light flowed back to God, some into the world and some was imprisoned in matter.

our world then is these sparks of light and that which is enclosed in matter.

Thus, on the tree of the Seifiriot there are two principles
as we look at the tree, the left side is the restrictive side and the right
side is the expansive side

creation comes from the interplay of these two dynamics.

in the middle of the tree are the points of equilibrium--beauty and the
foundation, so the process of creation goes in kind of a zig zag effect
and at different levels, expansion and contraction are manifest.

for example:

on the right is wisdom, and expansive attribute, while on the left
is understanding or intelligence, a more restrictive attribute.

on the right is mercy (hesod) and on the left is Geburah meaning judgement
or severity or power. this is limiting and the way evil came into the world.

the important thing is the interplay of dynamics in which a balance is achieved/
this is a continuous process, not something that took place only in the
beginning, but creation is always going on.

thus, to detect or see the moment by moment appearance of something out
of nothing is one of the big things in Issac Luria's mysticism

however, how you do that, if he ever gave instructions, is no longer available
in the Jewish tradition today.

turn back one page and begin "doctrine of the breaking of the vessels"

the world is good which is the light but matter (neo-platonism) is evil.

each person has a spark of divinity in them so

the goal is to free the light from matter, return it to God and arestore to the whole, in other words, reverse the process. *Read Essent. Kalichman, p. 97*

Tikkun is the process by which one liberates the sparks. the word means mending or restitution of a defect and the human must do certain things.

first, prayer, leads the soul back thru the creation.

prayer is the symbol of the process of creation, true prayer is modeled on mystical experience.

second, keeping the commandments

third, mystical study of the Torah

these must be done with honesty and openness. when tikkun is complete then the messiah will come as a token of the mystical redemption that has taken place.

all acts must be done with the appropriate intention, Kavanah, or they will not do any good.

Reincarnation Luria believed in this, all souls were sparks of divine light and eventually will rejoin the prim ordial Adam's soul.

I ones soul is reborn as a human soul it may be because of punishment from another life.

one can also be reincarnated as a non-human, either higher or lower and it takes a long time to return to ones maker by the time can be shortened by pennance, prayer and study.

he believed the end of the world was coming in the 16th century and looked for the coming of the Messiah.

many Jews saw this fulfilled in the mid 17th cent. when Sabbetai Zevi was thought to be the messiah. This turned out, needless to say, as not so.

education.

* * * * *

SABBATIANISM AND MYSTICAL HERESY

Sabbatai Zvi (1626-1676) was a Jewish mystic whose claim to be the Messiah gave rise to a worldwide Jewish messianic fervor. He was the central figure in messianic movement whose vitality didn't wane until the 18th century.

Sabbatai was born in Smyrna, where he received a thorough education in the Talmud. As an adolescent he immersed himself in kabbala and followed a strict ascetic regimen. Throughout his life he was a manic/depressant. In his exalted states he trespassed Jewish law and committed outrageous deeds.

In 1648 he publically announced that he was the Messiah and after wandering thruout Greece and Turkey, he returned to Smyrna and eventually settled in Jerusalem and Cairo.

In 1665 word reached Sabbatai of a youn Kabbalist, Nathan of Gaza, who was reputed to cure afflicted souls. Nathan was convinced, and succeeded in convincing Sabbatai, that his (Sabbatai's) psychological states were proof of his messianic destiny. Throughout 1665 Nathan spread the news of Sabbatai's identity as the Messiah.

Nathan's letters ignited and enthusiastic response thruout the entire Jewish world. Sabbatai eventually traveled to Constantinople hoping to convert the Sultan to Judaism. After a complicated series of events, perhaps under threat of execution, ended up converting to Islam.

When news of his apostasy spread the high pitched excitment died down. He lived for 10 more years surrounded by his devoted believers, who interpreted his paradoxical behaviour as one more phase in the tormented life and necessary sufferings of a messiah.

Sabbatai's conversion marked the true beginning of the Sabbatian movement, which was energized by a passion for

revolution. The advent of the messiah meant release from the oppressive status quo and the creation of a new world order and new norms of behaviour which, to the orthodox, were heretical in nature.

When Sabbatai converted to Islam this opened a gap between the two spheres of inner and outer experience, of redemption and it was a conflict for which no one was prepared. Everyone had to ask themselves whether they were willing to discover the truth about the expected redemption in the distressing course of history or in the inner reality which had revealed itself in the depths of the soul.

The Sabbatians disparaged the 'unknown' god. They believed that in the martyrdom of exile Israel had lost the true and pure knowledge of God. The object of religion can only be the 'god of Israel' and its unity with the Shekinah. The Sabbateans developed a Trinity of the unknown God and the idea developed that the completion of salvation is dependent upon the separate appearance of a messiah for each of these three aspect of trinity, with a female messiah for the last (the shekinah).

Even the moderate Sabbatians tried to evolve a conception of 'God which conflicted with the fundamental tenents of Judaism. The reaction of of orthodoxy and also of orthodox Kabbalism against an attempt to tear the God of Reason and the revealed God asunder, is very comprehensible.

The Sabbatian emphasis on the redemptive personality of the leader and its identification of psychological states with divine processes helped prepare the way for the Hasidic movement.

* * * * *

HASIDISM OF 18th CENT. EUROPE

No other phase in the development of Jewish mysticism has been so thoroughly described in literature as the latest

Martin Buber, books like the Chosen, or the Book of light by Chaim Potok, etc. have made it the best known Jewish mysticism

there was a Hasidic movement in Germany in the 12th and 13th century but it has no relation to this one.

the new Hasidism was founded shortly before the middle of the 18th cent by that famous saint and mystic Israel Baal Shem ("Master of the Holy Name") who ^{Born} ~~died~~ in 1760 and who during his life-time impressed the mark of his personality on the movement.

Particularly during the past three decades the literature of Hasidism has grown enormously for Hasidism is a living phenomena and still with us and remains a living force in the lives of countless thousands of people.

the emotional world of Hasidism exercised a strong fascination upon men who were primarily concerned with the spiritual regeneration of Judaism.

in general, although it would be very misleading to call it perfect, the style of Hasidic books is easier and more lucid than that of the earlier Kabbalistic works of literature.

they have a breath of modernity about them

following the Lurianic mysticism which you will recall had an important part played by the Messianic element, a group carrying this hope to the extreme arose known as Sabbatianism in which the hope was fervent that the messiah would come and liberate from political and religious oppression.

several messiah figures were involved over a period of some 50 years, including Sabbitani Zevi and Jacob Frank, their hope was an urge to "redemption in our time"

Hasidism, on the other hand broadly speaking represents an attempt to make the world of Kabbalism, through a certain transformation or re-interpretation, accessible to the masses of the people, and in this it was extraordinarily successful.

in other words, hasidism was the result of the various failures of the messiah to appear.

hasidism represents an attempt to preserve those elements of Kabbalism which were capable of evoking a popular response, but stripped of their messianic flavor to which they owed their chief successes during the preceeding period.

Hasidism tried to eliminate the element of Messianism--with its dazzling but highly dangerous amalgamation of mysticism and the apocalyptic mood--w/o renouncing the popular appeal of later kabbalism.

one can speak of the "neutralization" of the messianic elements.

the old Lurianic doctrine of the "uplifting of the holy sparks" was deprived of its intrinsic Messianic meaning by introducing two different aspects of redemption.

one was said to be the individualistic redemption, or salvation, of the soul and the second the truly messianic redemption which is, of course, a phenomenon concerning the whold body of the community of Israel and not the individual soul.

this uplifting of the sparks was assumed already by the Hasidism but it was disconnected from the coming of the messiah.

in the beginning, Hasidism bore a good many revivalist traits.

its founder, Baal shem tov, had evolved a new form of religious consciousness in which rabbinical learning played no essential part

for the foundations of his immediate experience he went back to the kabbalistic books which helped him to give expression to his emotional enthusiasm.

He follows the ideas of the Tsimtsum of God, the uplifting of the sparks, the conception of Devekuth as the highest religious value and other ideas already spoken of in Kabbalism.

for the soaring flight of the soul from the worlds created in the act of Tsimtsum there are no limits.

he says: "He who serves God in the 'great way' assembles all his inner power and rises upwards in his thoughts and breaks through all skies in one act and rises higher than the angels and the seraphs and the thrones, and that is the perfect worship." and

In prayer and in the commandment which one keeps, there is a great and a small way. . .but the 'great way' is that of right preparation and enthusiasm through which he unites himself with the upper worlds."

the clearest reflection of this enthusiasm is found in Hasidic prayer for it is all movement.

to the Hasidic mind Devekuth (adhesion) and Kavvanah (right intention) are primarily emotional values

Baal Shem Tov (1760-1810)

he was an unlearned enthusiast from Poland and a wonder worker but he captured the hearts of thousands of simple pious people and even among the educated.

JOY was emphasized, and service was given in joy, the experience of God is a joyful experience, an emotional experience and it is fun.

he taught that this joy can be found in:

first: service of the community

second: appreciation of nature

third: taking one virtue and trying to embody it perfectly.

forth: prayer and keeping the commandments and meditation

Hasidism emphasized

first, the community was the place of the experience of the divine, not that private prayer was not practiced, but often they gather in community for prayer for God is present in the community where the Shekinah is found.

this is the closest thing to God on Earth

second the ideal is not the student of Torah, but it is the one who knows the higher truth found in mystical experience.

the ideal man is the charismatic figure who is the center of the community of followers, who has been illuminated and in contact with the divine.

he does symbolic acts, all acts of the leader are symbolic. /

Zaddik , as in earlier schools, is the name given to this leader but it is far more important in Hasidism than ever before.

zaddiks do strange things, they talk about God in familiar terms, much like Chung Tzu of Taoist China spoke of the "Great Clod". some even curse God.

the belief was that the zaddik has to descend to help us and that he helps the whole person, not just the spiritual part.

he is the model of what the mystic is--spiritual leader and judge in all things in the community

He is approached by members of the community to decide on problems.

He is not necessarily a scholar, tho he can be, but he gives the community its direction and also relies on the community to help him in his work.

usually the Zaddik is such a strong leader that they seldom get along and there is only one per community,

how does one become a Zaddik?

He who has attained the highest degree of spiritual solitude, who is capable of being alone with God, is the true center of the community, because he has reached the stage at which true communion becomes possible.

to live among ordinary men and yet be alone with God, to speak profane language and yet draw the strength to live from the source of existence, from the "upper root" of the soul--that is a paradox which only the mystical devotee is able to realize in his life and which makes him the center of the community of men.

the whole development centers round the personality of the Hasidic saint or Zaddik.

personality takes the place of doctrine

the opinions particular to the exalted individual are less important than his character, and mere learning, knowledge of torah, no longer occupies the most important place in the scale of religious values

a tale is told of a famous saint who said: "I did not go to the "maggid" of Meseritz to learn Torah from him but to watch him tie his boot-laces."

by the way, maggid of meseritz was the main disciple of Baal Shem Tov.

the miraculous thing about it all is the fact that Hasidism did not conflict much more sharply

with orthodox Judaism then it did;; and yet everything seemed to move towards a mortal struggle.

the personality of the zaddik, its interpretation by the Hasidic writers, their insistence upon his supreme religious authority, his elevation to the rank of a source of canonical inspiration, of a medium of revelation--all this fairly compelled a clash with the recognized religious authorities of rabbinic Judaism.

it is not surprising that these men did everything in their power to avoid a conflict with a Judaism they intended to areform from within, and where it could not be avoided, to blunt its edge.

classical Hasidism was not the product of some theory or other, not even of kabbalistic doctrine, but off direct, spontaneous religious experience.

most were unsophisticated so the form in which they expressed themselves was primitive compared to the older Kabbalah

this is why we find a far more definite pantheistic tinge in the formulation of the thoughts of the first hasidic thinkers than ever before.

thus the doctrine of God's immanence in all things was defined as the very root and core of Hasidism.

the doctrine is not new, as we have disscussed, but the primitive enthusiasm with which it was expounded and the truly pantheistic exhilaration evoked by the belief that God "surrounds everything and pervades everything."

connection between mysticism and magic

the close connection between mysticism and magic will be our final consideration.

in Baal Shem tov one has a mystic whose authentic utterances permit no doubt as to the mystical nature of his religious experience and whose earlier and later follower have resolutely

taken the same path.

and yet he is also a true "Baal Shem", that is to say, a master of the great Name of God, a master of practical Kabbalism, a magician.

he had power to work miracles with his amulet, or other magical practices and with the mystical enthusiasm which seeks no object but God.

at the end of Jewish mysticism these two tendencies are as closely interwoven as they were in the beginning, and in many of the intermediate states of its development.

Martin Buber points out that Hasidism draws not the least part of its strength from its connection between the magical and mystical faculties of its heros.

when all is said and done, it is this myth which represents the greatest creative expression of Hasidism.

the hasidic tale which center on the lives of the great Zaddiks.

this overwhelming wealth of tales which play an important part in the social life of the Hasidim.

to tell a story of the deeds of saints has become a new religious value, and there is something of the celebration of a areligious rite about it.

their torah took the form of an inexhaustible fountain of story telling.

thus, I will end with a story of which the subject is the very history of hasidism itself:

When Baal Shem had a difficult task before him, he would go to a certain place in the woods, light a fire and meditate in prayer--and what he had set out to perform was done. When a generation later the "Maggid" of Meseritz was faced with the same task he would go to the same place in the woods and say: We can no longer light the fire, but we can still speak the prayers--and what he wanted done became reality. Again a generation later Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov had

to perform this task. And he too went into the woods and said: We can no longer light a fire, nor do we know the secret meditations belonging to the prayer, but we do know the place in the woods to which it all belongs--and that must be sufficient; and sufficient it was. But when another generation had passed and Rabbi Israel of Rishin was called upon to perform the task, he sat down on his golden chair in his castle and said: We cannot light the fire, we cannot speak the prayers, we do not know the place, but we can tell the story of how it was done. And, the story-teller adds, the story which he told had the same effect as the actions of the other three.

this story reflects the transformation of all hasidic values, a transformation so profound that in the end all that remained of the mystery was the tale.

that is where Jewish mysticism finds itself today.

after an interval of a hundred years, during which hasidism as a whole developed independently of the rabbinic tradition, there occurred a revival of rabbinic learning

Hasidism learned to speak a language which no longer shocked the orthodox.

the irony is that what started out as a heresy, is now considered orthodox.

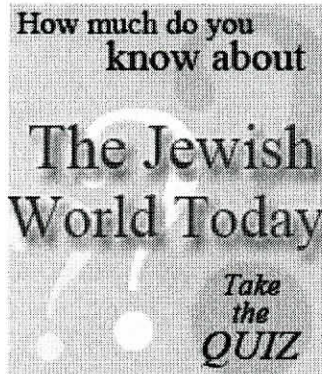
Chabad Today - Chabad is an acronym for the top and bottom (Chochma (wisdom) Bina (understanding) and Da'at (knowledge)) elevated mind above heart

The Lubavitcher Hasidic movement continues to grow, influence extending far beyond Jewish Orthodoxy.

By Sue Fishkoff

Although many Hasidic sects exist today, Chabad-Lubavitch is by far the most well-known, because of its public profile. Starting in the 1950s, the group's leader, Menachem Mendel Schneerson--the seventh and last Chabad rebbe--emphasized outreach to non-observant Jews. To increase Jewish observance, he sent emissaries around the world to revive small communities, bring individuals to more traditional practice, and establish Jewish communities where none existed before.

Schneerson died in 1994 at the age of 91, after which media coverage of Chabad focused mostly on the belief of some Lubavitchers that the rebbe was the messiah and would come back from the grave as King Messiah. As the following article shows, there is another story of Chabad in the years since Schneerson's death. Excerpted with permission from *The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch* (Schocken Books).



founded late 18th cent in Russia moved to NY in 1940
Chabad Center - Alhambra
4000 San Pedro
headquarters - Brooklyn, NY

MyJewishLearning.com

In the decade after Schneerson's death, Chabad's infrastructure grew faster than during his lifetime. Between 1994 and 2002, more than 610 new emissary couples took up their postings and more than 705 new Chabad institutions were opened, including 450 new facilities purchased or built from scratch, bringing the total number of institutions worldwide--synagogues, schools, camps, and community centers--to 2,766. In the year 2000, 51 new Chabad facilities were established in California alone.

There are now several thousand Chabad institutions opened in over 65 countries since Rabbi Schneerson's death

The Numbers

Annual operating costs of Chabad's empire today approach \$1 billion. And that budget doesn't include construction costs for new buildings, which have been going up at an astonishing rate since Schneerson's passing: a \$10 million synagogue in Bal Harbour, Florida; \$25 million for a Chabad complex in San Diego; \$20 million for a Jewish Children's Museum in Crown Heights; plus a \$1 million Chabad center in Las

Vegas, \$2 million for American Friends of Lubavitch headquarters in Washington, D.C., \$5 million for a day school in Pittsburgh, and \$3 million for a community center in Montreal.

Chabad building projects around the world have kept pace with those of North America: a \$15 million girls' school outside Paris; a \$14 million community center in Buenos Aires; plus soup kitchens in Brazil, synagogues in Germany, schools in Latvia and Lithuania, and orphanages in Ukraine. Chabad's expansion into the former Soviet Union alone is phenomenal. In 1994 the movement maintained emissaries in just eight cities in Russia. By January 2002, Chabad had full-time emissaries placed in 61 cities across Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, the Baltics, and Central Asia, with 13,000 children studying in their day schools and thousands more attending their kindergartens and summer camps....

It's easier to count buildings and bank accounts than believers. No one knows exactly how big Chabad is in terms of actual Lubavitcher Hasidim. There's no membership roster, no official census. Many reporters use the figure of 200,000 Lubavitchers worldwide, but that's little more than a guesstimate.

Success Beyond Chabad Hasidim

Numbers don't tell the whole story. Chabad is of interest not because of those relatively few Jews who lead Hasidic lives, but because of the success with which these Lubavitchers have made their mark in the non-Hasidic public arena. "You can't measure their influence by the number of guys they have in black hats," points out Samuel Heilman, sociology and Jewish studies professor at City University of New York and author of *Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry*....

One telling indicator is the number of Chabad rabbis filling leadership positions within the mainstream Jewish communities of many countries. At least half the pulpit rabbis in England, Italy, and Australia, and almost all in South Africa and Holland, are Lubavitchers, and Chabad exerts considerable influence in the Jewish communities of France and Germany. Chabad rabbis control *kashrut* (kosher food) supervision for several key cities around the world, and a Chabad rabbi heads the rabbinical council in Montreal. In the former Soviet Union, Chabad has emerged as the mainstream denomination in what is now the world's third-largest Jewish community....



Chabad does not wield anywhere near the same Jewish institutional muscle in the United States. But the past decade has witnessed a sharp increase in the number of Lubavitchers teaching in non-Lubavitch Jewish schools and filling pulpit positions in non-Lubavitch synagogues in this country. And in the fast-growing Jewish communities of Florida and California in particular, where Chabad Houses have been opening with great alacrity, Chabad is very often the only Orthodox presence in a given town or city. It is becoming the face of Jewish Orthodoxy for the Jewish and the general public.

Reasons for the Success

What is the key to the movement's success? Chabad has money, sure, most of it donated by non-Orthodox Jews. Chabad has a formidable infrastructure. It has an elegant and fascinating theology, an interpretation of reality based on the *kabbalah*, or Jewish mysticism, that many Jews find intellectually and spiritually compelling. Lubavitchers are adaptable--more than any other Hasidic group, Chabad has been able and willing to use the political and technological tools of 20th-century America to promote its cause.

But above all, the reason for Chabad's continued vitality and phenomenal growth can be found in the *shlichim*--thousands of smart, idealistic young men and women filled with zeal, energy, and love of the Jewish people, young Hasidim in their early 20s who are willing to leave their comfortable homes and families and move to Shanghai or Zaire, where they dedicate their lives to running Chabad operations they more often than not build themselves from the ground up. And they do it, they say, because the rebbe wants them to.

"We're carrying on the Rebbe's revolution," says one Lubavitch woman in her early 20s, who moved from Brooklyn with her new husband to establish a Chabad operation in Russia's Far East.

That "revolution" began in 1950, even before Schneerson took over Chabad's helm from his father-in-law, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe. One of his first actions was to send a shliach couple that year from Brooklyn to Morocco, beginning the worldwide outreach campaign for which Chabad is now known. By 1995, the first anniversary of Schneerson's death, two or three Lubavitcher couples were being sent out from Brooklyn every week, ready to teach Torah and bring Jews back to Judaism.

And they don't go for a year or two, but for the rest of their lives. These young, newly married Chabad couples leave home with one-way tickets and--if they're lucky--a year's salary. After that, most are expected to make their own way financially, by charging for certain services, such as day school or summer camps, by drumming up donors, and by taking related jobs in the local Jewish community. Chabad headquarters in Brooklyn will supply them with resource materials, adjudicate disputes, and set the general course of the movement's work internationally, but the individual shliach couple is pretty much on its own, with only pluck and willpower to sustain it. Chabad is thus a highly centralized, yet profoundly decentralized movement....

"Chabad has the biggest army of people in the Jewish world ready to live on the edge of poverty," says historian Arthur Hertzberg, author of numerous books on Zionism and Jewish history. Hertzberg wasn't always a fan of Chabad. When messianic hopes began to swirl around the dying rebbe in the early 1990s, Hertzberg told the *New York Times* that Chabad resembled the followers of Shabbetai Zevi, the notorious 17th-century false Messiah.

But his personal encounters with Chabad shlichim since the Rebbe's death have changed his thinking. His daughter, a member of a Conservative congregation in Fresno, California, sent her children to the local Chabad school, a fact Hertzberg relates with pride.

"Those thirty-five hundred shlichim are the most holy group in the Jewish world today," he declares. "They are every day engaged in *kiddush Hashem* [sanctification of God's name]. Everywhere I go, I bump into one of these young couples working their heads off. They live on nothing, and they stay with it. I can disagree with their theology, but I can only admire them."

Critics of Chabad

Not everyone likes Chabad. The movement's highly public, in-your-face brand of Judaism makes it off-

putting to some American Jews, as does the way shlichim seem to steamroll into town, setting up shop with great fanfare in communities where the Jewish population has maintained a more circumspect profile. Chabad's refusal to recognize non-Orthodox Jewish denominations puts the group at odds with the majority of rabbis working in this country, and with most national Jewish organizations. Chabad has been taken to court many times, for everything from zoning violations to public menorahs--most of the time by other Jews...

Chabad's right-wing stance on Israel, its interference in Israeli elections, and its support in the U.S. both for a "moment of silence" in public schools and federal funding for parochial schools places the movement on the far right edge of the American Jewish dialogue. But unlike other Hasidic groups, they are still very much a part of that dialogue. Other Jewish leaders say that, like it or not, Chabad's impact on the American Jewish scene has been far-reaching.



Sue Fishkoff is a special correspondent for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, based in Northern California and covers American Jewish issues, with a special focus on Jewish identity and affiliation. She was previously the associate editor of a weekly newspaper in Monterey, California and a regular contributor to the Jerusalem Post, *Moment* magazine, and other Jewish publications.